

1. Project Description

A. Statement of GO Activity

Statement of Ground Operations Activity

This ground operations activity involves new and ongoing monitoring of populations of Mojave Fringe-toed Lizards in dune ecosystems that are important OHV recreation areas or have a history of OHV recreation. The objective for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is to understand distribution, habitat components, and numbers of Mojave Fringe-toed Lizards in areas that have OHV recreation, both authorized and unauthorized. BLM biologists are concerned about this lizard species because it has undergone rapid range loss in OHV landscapes in the western Mojave Desert and is thought to be extirpated west of Barstow, California. With this monitoring program from the OHMVR Division, BLM wildlife biologists and contracted biologists will have established baseline information in 2009/2010 in the Copper Dunes OHV Area (Lake Havasu Field Office – San Bernardino County) and Rice Dunes, Palen Dunes, and Ford Dry Lake (Palm Springs Field Office – Riverside County). The ongoing monitoring effort at Dumont Dunes OHV Open Area and surrounding area (Barstow Field Office – San Bernardino County) is also part of the monitoring program and is developing population trend data for the “Amargosa River Distinct Population Segment” of the Mojave Fringe-toed Lizard, which has been petitioned for Federal listing as a threatened or endangered population unit.

To obtain desired information, BLM will: (1) determine the mechanisms driving the relationship between environment, habitat selection and movements by Mojave Fringe-toed Lizards; (2) determine the effects of OHV management on habitat selection and movement; (3) conduct a record search of known populations rangewide and compile the information into a state-of-the-knowledge report, and (4) consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the findings.

This grant application does not request funding for the Riverside County dune habitats of Mojave Fringe-toed Lizards, which are now closed to OHV travel and serve as controls to study responses of the lizards after OHV riding is no longer present. This grant would support monitoring at popular OHV recreation sites in the eastern Mojave Desert and in the Upper Sonoran Desert. The request is for support for contracts (1) to continue the population studies by Dr. William Presch and his graduate students from California State University, Fullerton, for the Dumont Dunes OHV Area and surrounding dune habitats; and (2) to establish a baseline for lizard populations, vegetation cover, and sand habitats in the Copper Dunes OHV Area on the California side of the lower Colorado River. These two sites are critical to the fate of Mojave Fringed-toed Lizards as they are at the edge of the species range. Their genetic diversity and capacity for eventual range expansion from these areas to new habitats during the current desert climate change are key factors in keeping the lizard populations robust if habitat changes take place. Dr. Presch has censused the lizards at Dumont Dunes and has found that lizard density correlates with vegetation cover. For this portion of the lizard monitoring program, field crews will expand the study area outward from the primary dunes riding area to detect additional populations where OHV activity is lower or absent. Monitoring lizards at the Copper Dunes OHV Area is critical because it will be the first time that Mojave Fringe-toed Lizards in the area have been studied in depth.

B. Relation of Proposed Project to OHV Recreation

Environmental groups have concerns about the ability of the Mojave Fringe-toed Lizard population at Dumont Dunes OHV Area to survive in the long-term. A petition to list the population at Dumont Dunes as a Distinct Population Segment eligible for protection under the federal Endangered Species Act was filed with the US Fish and Wildlife Service in 2006. The petition for listing cited off-highway recreational riding at Dumont Dunes as a major threat to the lizards.

This study intends to determine whether BLM management of motorized recreation, particularly in open riding areas, is impairing populations of Mojave Fringe-toed Lizards. Testing the validity of this hypothesis is being made in two ways: (1) an examination of lizard populations in two OHV open riding areas (Dumont Dunes and Copper Dunes) and in comparable dune habitats nearby with little or no OHV riding; and (2) a study of lizard populations in dune ecosystems that were formerly OHV open riding areas and are now closed since BLM enacted amendments to the BLM management plan for the California Desert Conservation Area, specifically regarding the North and Eastern Colorado Desert. The latter element of

monitoring, supported by BLM funding, is important to demonstrate whether lizard populations actually increase when OHV recreation is excluded from areas where it was once widespread. This inquiry is important for learning what are the major and minor contributing factors to the rises or declines in Mojave Fringe-toed Lizard population and whether OHV exclusion makes a positive difference in lizard population numbers.

This survey will assist in detecting any residual impacts from motorized recreation on the Mojave Fringe-toed Lizard in core habitats in eastern Riverside County and lead to understanding the impact role of OHV recreation at the margins of the lizard range where lizard populations are likely to be most vulnerable. BLM wildlife biologists will have new information lizard populations on the basis of which BLM can adjust wildlife management and OHV recreation to avoid the necessity for federal listing of population segments of the Mojave Fringe-toed Lizard. Improved signing, small-scale fencing, habitat restoration, trail improvements, and outreach to the OHV riding public can make a difference in securing long-term OHV recreation opportunities and proving that OHV recreation exists compatibly and sustainably with habitat and wildlife management goals.

This study also supports the joint BLM-OHMRV Division effort of achieving science-based multiple-use management that creates long-term compatibility between high-quality motorized recreation opportunity and sustainable populations of all wildlife species in the same space.

C. Size of the Project

The project sites are listed below with their acreage and OHV recreation status.

Area	Acreage	OHV Status	Location (Air Distance)
Copper Dunes OHV Area*	1,200	Open	3 miles SW of Parker Dam
Dumont Dunes OHV Area*	13,000	Open	11 miles S of Tecopa
Ford Dry Lake ACEC	7,100	Closed	25 miles W of Blythe
Palen Dunes	24,400	Closed	39 miles NW of Blythe
Rice Dunes	4,500	Closed	29 miles N of Blythe

Sites marked with asterisks are areas for which funding is sought.

D. Location and description of OHV opportunities

The region covered in this project consists of remote locations amid the rugged mountain terrain in eastern Riverside and San Bernardino counties. One site, the Copper Dunes OHV Area, along the Lower Colorado River, is within the urbanized area known as the Parker Strip.

The Parker Strip, a megasite for multiple recreation pastimes such as boating, motorized recreation, hiking, and camping, offers two OHV open areas, Copper Dunes and Crossroads on the California side of the lower Colorado River, plus a designated route network for touring around the outstanding landscape of the Whipple Mountains and Sonoran Desert woodlands. The Strip also provides access to OHV opportunities immediately across the stateline in Arizona.

Eastern Riverside County west of Blythe is an increasingly popular touring area for OHV folks on BLM designated routes. Many OHV routes run along the boundaries of wildernesses to destinations for non-motorized recreation and backcountry camping in wilderness. Route touring is challenging fun and offers the different experience of driving solitude for people who might be too familiar with traffic congestion in coastal southern California.

The Dumont Dunes is outstanding for dune riding and affords great vistas toward the Kingston Mountains Wilderness to the east and the mountains to the west on the east side of Death Valley National Park. A designated OHV route network, managed by the BLM Barstow and Needles field offices, provide opportunities for ranging into seldom-visited and never crowded areas of Mojave Desert. These OHV opportunities are at the nexus of world-class tourism sites in southern Inyo and northern San Bernardino counties, and OHV visitors come from as far away as Europe to experience the desert public lands.

2. Rerouting Requirements

Rerouting

- (a) Does your project involve rerouting of any roads and trails? ☐ Yes ☒ No

If response to question (a) is 'Yes', a Project timeline, conceptual drawings and site plans are required (See 'Attachments' tab at the top of the screen)

If response to question (a) is 'No', skip details related to rerouting

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

Version # _____

APP # 700240

1. **Project Timeline (Required if project includes necessary rerouting)**
2. **Conceptual Drawings and Site Plans (Required if project includes necessary rerouting)**

3 **Project-Specific Maps**

Attachments:

[Copper Basin Dunes OHV Area SW of Parker Dam
Dumont Dunes and Vicinity, northeast San Bernardino County](#)

4. **Optional Project-Specific Application Documents**

Project Cost Estimate for Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program - 2008/2009
Agency: BLM - California Desert District
Application: Ecology - CDD Mojave Fringe-toed Lizard Population Monitoring

6/2/2009

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:		Version # _____	APP # _____
APPLICANT NAME :	BLM - California Desert District		
PROJECT TITLE :	Ecology - CDD Mojave Fringe-toed Lizard Population Monitoring	PROJECT NUMBER (Division use only) :	
PROJECT TYPE :	<input type="checkbox"/> Acquisition <input type="checkbox"/> Development <input type="checkbox"/> Education & Safety <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ground Operations <input type="checkbox"/> Law Enforcement <input type="checkbox"/> Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Restoration		
PROJECT DESCRIPTION :	<p>Statement of Ground Operations Activity This ground operations activity involves new and ongoing monitoring of populations of Mojave Fringe-toed Lizards in dune ecosystems that are important OHV recreation areas or have a history of OHV recreation. The objective for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is to understand distribution, habitat components, and numbers of Mojave Fringe-toed Lizards in areas that have OHV recreation, both authorized and unauthorized. BLM biologists are concerned about this lizard species because it has undergone rapid range loss in OHV landscapes in the western Mojave Desert and is thought to be extirpated west of Barstow, California. With this monitoring program from the OHMVR Division, BLM wildlife biologists and contracted biologists will have established baseline information in 2009/2010 in the Copper Dunes OHV Area (Lake Havasu Field Office – San Bernardino County) and Rice Dunes, Palen Dunes, and Ford Dry Lake (Palm Springs Field Office – Riverside County). The ongoing monitoring effort at Dumont Dunes OHV Open Area and surrounding area (Barstow Field Office – San Bernardino County) is also part of the monitoring program and is developing population trend data for the "Amargosa River Distinct Population Segment" of the Mojave Fringe-toed Lizard, which has been petitioned for Federal listing as a threatened or endangered population unit.</p> <p>To obtain desired information, BLM will: (1) determine the mechanisms driving the relationship between environment, habitat selection and movements by Mojave Fringe-toed Lizards; (2) determine the effects of OHV management on habitat selection and movement; (3) conduct a record search of known populations rangewide and compile the information into a state-of-the-knowledge report, and (4) consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the findings.</p> <p>This grant application does not request funding for the Riverside County dune habitats of Mojave Fringed-toed Lizards, which are now closed to OHV travel and serve as controls to study responses of the lizards after OHV riding is no longer present. This grant would support monitoring at popular OHV recreation sites in the eastern Mojave Desert and in the Upper Sonoran Desert. The request is for support for contracts (1) to continue the population studies by Dr. William Presch and his graduate students from California State University, Fullerton, for the Dumont Dunes OHV Area and surrounding dune habitats; and (2) to establish a baseline for lizard populations, vegetation cover, and sand habitats in the Copper Dunes OHV Area on the California side of the lower Colorado River. These two sites are critical to the fate of Mojave Fringed-toed Lizards as they are at the edge of the species range. Their genetic diversity and capacity for eventual range expansion from these areas to new habitats during the current desert climate change are key factors in keeping the lizard populations robust if habitat changes take place. Dr. Presch has censused the lizards at Dumont Dunes and has found that lizard density correlates with vegetation cover. For this portion of the lizard monitoring program, field crews will expand the study area outward from the primary dunes riding area to detect additional populations where OHV activity is lower or absent. Monitoring lizards at the Copper Dunes OHV Area is critical because it will be the first time that Mojave Fringe-toed Lizards in the area have been studied in depth.</p>		

	Line Item	Qty	Rate	UOM	Grant Request	Match	Total
DIRECT EXPENSES							
Program Expenses							
1	Staff						

Project Cost Estimate for Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program - 2008/2009
Agency: BLM - California Desert District
Application: Ecology - CDD Mojave Fringe-toed Lizard Population Monitoring

6/2/2009

	Line Item	Qty	Rate	UOM	Grant Request	Match	Total
	Other-Wildlife Biologist - Palm Springs	400.000	70.080	HRS	0.00	28,032.00	28,032.00
	Other-Wildlife Biologist - CA Desert Dis	80.000	51.410	HRS	0.00	4,113.00	4,113.00
	Other-OHV Program Administrator - CA Sta	40.000	39.070	HRS	0.00	1,563.00	1,563.00
	Other-Administrative Assistant	24.000	41.020	HRS	0.00	984.00	984.00
	Other-Contracting - CA Desert District	24.000	51.040	HRS	0.00	1,225.00	1,225.00
	Other-Deputy Director - CA Desert Distri	10.000	86.080	HRS	0.00	861.00	861.00
	Total for Staff				0.00	36,778.00	36,778.00
2	Contracts						
	Other-MFL Monitoring for Dumont Dune OHV	1.000	30000.000	PKG	30,000.00	0.00	30,000.00
	Other-MFL Baseline for Copper Dunes	1.000	25000.000	PKG	25,000.00	0.00	25,000.00
	Total for Contracts				55,000.00	0.00	55,000.00
3	Materials / Supplies						
4	Equipment Use Expenses						
5	Equipment Purchases						
6	Others						
7	Administrative Costs						
	Administrative Costs-contract administra	40.000	50.000	HRS	0.00	2,000.00	2,000.00
	Total Program Expenses				55,000.00	38,778.00	93,778.00
	TOTAL DIRECT EXPENSES				55,000.00	38,778.00	93,778.00
	TOTAL EXPENDITURES				55,000.00	38,778.00	93,778.00

Project Cost Summary for Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program - 2008/2009
Agency: BLM - California Desert District
Application: Ecology - CDD Mojave Fringe-toed Lizard Population Monitoring

6/2/2009

	Line Item	Grant Request	Match	Total	Narrative
DIRECT EXPENSES					
Program Expenses					
1	Staff	0.00	36,778.00	36,778.00	
2	Contracts	55,000.00	0.00	55,000.00	
3	Materials / Supplies	0.00	0.00	0.00	
4	Equipment Use Expenses	0.00	0.00	0.00	
5	Equipment Purchases	0.00	0.00	0.00	
6	Others	0.00	0.00	0.00	
7	Administrative Costs	0.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	
Total Program Expenses		55,000.00	38,778.00	93,778.00	
TOTAL DIRECT EXPENSES		55,000.00	38,778.00	93,778.00	
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		55,000.00	38,778.00	93,778.00	

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

Version # _____

APP # 700240

ITEM 1 and ITEM 2

ITEM 1

- a. ITEM 1 - Has a CEQA Notice of Determination (NOD) been filed for the Project? ☐ Yes ☒ No
(Please select Yes or No)

ITEM 2

- b. ITEM 2 - Are the proposed activities a "Project" under CEQA Guidelines Section 15378? ☐ Yes ☒ No
(Please select Yes or No)
- c. The Application is requesting funds solely for personnel and support to enforce OHV laws and ensure public safety. These activities would not cause any physical impacts on the environment and are thus not a "Project" under CEQA. (Please select Yes or No) ☐ Yes ☒ No
- d. Other. Explain why proposed activities would not cause any physical impacts on the environment and are thus not a "Project" under CEQA. DO NOT complete ITEMS 3 – 9

This project has been categorically excluded from analysis as part of the requirement to conduct NEPA reviews.

ITEM 3 - Impact of this Project on Wetlands

ITEM 4 - Cumulative Impacts of this Project

ITEM 5 - Soil Impacts

ITEM 6 - Damage to Scenic Resources

ITEM 7 - Hazardous Materials

Is the proposed Project Area located on a site included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the California Government Code (hazardous materials)? (Please select Yes or No) ☐ Yes ☒ No

If YES, describe the location of the hazard relative to the Project site, the level of hazard and the measures to be taken to minimize or avoid the hazards.

ITEM 8 - Potential for Adverse Impacts to Historical or Cultural Resources

Would the proposed Project have potential for any substantial adverse impacts to historical or cultural resources? (Please select Yes or No) ☐ Yes ☒ No

If YES, describe the potential impacts and for any substantially adverse changes in the significance of historical or cultural resources and measures to be taken to minimize or avoid the impacts.

ITEM 9 - Indirect Significant Impacts

CEQA/NEPA Attachment

Attachments:

[NEPA determination for fringe-toed lizards](#)

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

Version # _____

APP # 700240

1. Project Cost Estimate - Q 1. (Auto populates from Cost Estimate)

1. As calculated on the Project Cost Estimate, the percentage of the cost of the Project covered by the Applicant is 3

(Check the one most appropriate) (Please select one from list)

- ☐ 76% or more (10 points)
☐ 51% - 75% (5 points)
☒ 26% - 50% (3 points)
☐ 25% (Match minimum) (No points)

2. Failure to Complete - Q 2.

2. Failure to complete the Project would result in: 8

(Check all that apply) : Maximum of 8 points (Please select applicable values)

- ☒ Loss of OHV Opportunity (6 points)
☐ Negative impact to cultural sites (2 points)
☒ Damage to special-status species or other sensitive habitat (2 points)
☐ Potential trespass (2 points)
☐ Additional damage to Facilities (1 point)

Explain each statement that was checked

The Bureau of Land Management is concerned that Dumont Dunes might close or vehicle use become more restricted if the US Fish and Wildlife Service determined that the Amargosa population of the Mojave Fringe-toed Lizard should be listed as an endangered or threatened species population. Without excellent information about lizard populations at Dumont Dunes and the dune environments nearby, BLM biologists do not have a basis for determining what, if any, are the long-term impacts of vehicles on lizards inside Dumont Dunes OHV Open Area. At Copper Dunes, BLM has no authoritative information about the population history or the current status of Mojave Fringe-toed Lizards. A baseline survey for the Copper Dunes, applied for here, would provide information to BLM on the population and would allow BLM to start trend monitoring for the lizard at this OHV site.

3. Sustain OHV Opportunity - Q 3.

3. The Project would sustain OHV Opportunity by 3

(Check all that apply) (Please select applicable values)

- ☐ Maintaining trail or road tread (5 points)
☐ Installing or repairing erosion control features (3 points)
☒ Providing traffic control and/or educational signage (3 points)
☐ Maintaining multi use (ATV, Dirt Bikes, 4x4, etc) (1 point)
☐ Providing varied levels of riding difficulty (1 point)

Explain each statement that was checked

Educational information would be provided on kiosk, signs, and by brochure. Informing OHV enthusiast will help improve responsible recreation.

4. Public Input - Q 4.

4. The Project was developed with public input employing the following 2

(Check all that apply) : Maximum of 2 points (Please select applicable values)

- ☐ Meeting(s) with the general public to discuss Project (1 point)

- ☒ Conference call(s) with interested parties (1 point)
- ☒ Meeting(s) with stakeholders (1 point)

Explain each statement that was checked

BLM wildlife biologists and OHV recreation planners meet by conference call monthly to discuss OHV and related wildlife issues. A monthly discussion topic for the four field offices (Lake Havasu, Needles, Palm Springs, Yuma) with Mojave Fringe-toed Lizard populations on the California side of the lower Colorado River is conservation measures for lizards in large dune ecosystems with recreational riding.

5. Utilization of Partnerships - Q 5.

5. The Project will utilize partnerships to successfully accomplish the Project. The number of partner organizations that will participate in the Project are 4

(Check the one most appropriate) (Please select one from list)

- ☒ 4 or more (4 points)
- ☐ 2 to 3 (2 points)
- ☐ 1 (1 point)
- ☐ None (No points)

List partner organization(s):

BLM field offices (Lake Havasu, Needles, Palm Springs, Yuma)

Mojave Fringe-toed Lizard working group

Humboldt State University - graduate student

California State University at Fullerton - faculty and graduate students

Desert Managers Group

6. Impact to Natural and Cultural Resources - Q 6.

6. The Project will avoid and/or minimize impact to natural and cultural resources by 1

(Check all that apply) : Maximum of 7 points (Please select applicable values)

- ☐ Maintaining physical barriers to control OHV use (1 point)
- ☐ Protecting water quality (1 point)
- ☐ Providing bridges instead of wet crossings where appropriate (1 point)
- ☒ Protecting special-status species (1 point)
- ☐ Re-routing trails to divert away from riparian/wetlands areas (1 point)
- ☐ Providing sanitary facilities (1 point)
- ☐ Protecting cultural site(s) (1 point)
- ☐ Site design precludes the need for the above measures (7 points)

Explain each statement that was checked

Operational monitoring of Mojave Fringe-toed Lizard populations on BLM public lands focuses on protecting those populations, documenting population changes and trends. and determining impacts from motorized recreation and travel.

7. Recycled Materials - Q 7.

7. The Project incorporates recycled materials by utilizing 1

(Check all that apply) (Please select applicable values)

- ☐ Barrier materials which include recycled content or materials obtained onsite (1 point)
- ☐ Signs, sign posts or education kiosks which use products with recycled content (1 point)

- ☐ Erosion control features which use materials with recycled content (1 point)
- ☐ Paper used for trail maps which includes recycled content (1 point)
- ☒ Other products with recycled content (Specify) (1 point) [field notes and data collection sheets]

8. Sustainable Technologies - Q 8.

8. The Project makes substantial use of sustainable technologies such as 0

- Alternative fuel vehicles and equipment
- Renewable energy sources (e.g., solar, wind)
- Low volatile organic compound emission materials (e.g., paint, sealants, carpet)
- Low flow plumbing fixtures
- Water efficient landscaping

(Check the one most appropriate) (Please select one from list)

☒ No (No points)

☐ Yes (4 points)

Explain 'Yes' response

9. Motorized Access - Q 9.

9. The Project improves and/or maintains facilities that provide motorized access to the following non-motorized recreation opportunities 6

(Check all that apply) Scoring: 2 points each, up to a maximum of 6 points (Please select applicable values)

☒ Camping

☐ Birding

☒ Hiking

☐ Equestrian trails

☐ Fishing

☐ Rock Climbing

☒ Other (Specify) [lizard photography]